

VI. *Account of a Bas-relief of Mithras found at York, explain'd by the Rev. Dr. Stukely, F. R. S. communicated to the Royal Society, by Mr. Francis Drake of York, Antiquary and F. R. S.*

York, October 25, 1749.

Read Nov. 23.
1749.

AS *York* was undoubtedly the *Roman*, Imperial City of *Britain*: So is it still, casually throwing up Remains of its antient Grandeur and Magnificence: Even down to our Time. About two Years ago, in digging the Foundation of a large House, since built, in our *Trans Tyberim Street*, called *Micklegate, quasi Muckle, or Great Street*, the Workmen went much below any former Foundation that could be observed on this Spot. And at the Depth of ten Feet, came to a Stone, which upon taking up, appeared to have Figures upon it, but miserably defaced. Upon my viewing of it soon after, I confess, I was at a Loss what to make of it; but judged it some Representation of an Heathen Sacrifice, or Game, and therefore sent as just a Drawing of it, as could be taken, to my very learned Friend Dr. *Stukely*, who according to his deep Knowledge in the Learning of the Antients, soon after returned me the following short, but curious Explanation of this uncommon Piece of Sculpture.

“ The Drawing (see *Tab. II.*) you sent me, of the
 “ Bas-relief, dug up in a Cellar in *Micklegate*, anno
 “ 1747. is a great Curiosity. ’Tis a Sculpture of *Mi-*
 “ *thras*, as usual, sacrificing a Bull. He has on, the
 “ *Persian* Mantle, called *Candys*, and the *Phrygian*
 “ Bonnet,

“ Bonnet, called *Tyara*. He represents the *Archimagus*, performing the great annual Sacrifice, at the Spring Equinox : According to the Patriarchal Usage.

“ These Ceremonies to *Mithras*, were generally celebrated in a Cave of a Rock ; therefore, this Sculpture was found so deep in the Earth.”

There is, commonly a Figure on each Side of him, habited in the same manner, standing cross-legg'd : The one holds a Torch up, the other down : Here is only the latter, in your Sculpture ; the other is imperfect.

“ Underneath, is the Figure of an Horse, intimating thereby, the Sun's Course : For in time, when the old patriarchal Customs became profaned and defecrated into Idolatry ; they made *Mithras* to be the *Apollo*, or the Sun. Whence these Sculptures had a Number of Symbols, relating to the solar Circuit of the Year, thro' the twelve Zodiacal Constellations.

“ The two Figures attending on the *Archimagus*, are inferior Officers to him. There is a Myltery in their standing cross-legg'd, like our Effigies of Croisaders in Churches, and it means the same thing : For the Cross was one Part of the *Mithriac* Ceremonies. These two, by the different Attitude of their Torches, represent Day, and Night, as *Mithras* represents the Sun. The Figure imperfectly drawn, at the Tail of the Horse, is I believe, a Genius, twisted round with a Snake ; which means the Vitality, imparted to all Things, by the solar Power, and Circle.

‘ The other Figures are too imperfect, to trouble you with Conjectures about them ; but they all regard the same Design. They are officiating Priests, and dress’d in such a symbolic manner, as intimates the Sun’s Influence, and annual Motion.

‘ The *Mithriac* Ceremonies, as likewise the Mysteries of the Antients, were but the expiring Remains of the antient, patriarchal Religion ; and Worship of the true God : As it were, swallowed up by Paganism, and the Devil’s Inventions. For indeed the Patriarchal Religion was no other than Christianity antedated.

‘ For in the *Mithriac* Ceremonies, and Mysteries, they had plainly, the two Christian Sacraments : Initiation by Baptism : And the sublime Communion by Bread, and Wine. *Mithras* is but another Name of a *Messiah*, in his priestly Character : It signifies Mediator.

‘ Thus writes *Tertullian*, c. 40. speaking of the Devil perverting the Rites of true Religion : “ (He), the Devil persuades those that are initiated into the *Mithriac* Ceremonies, to believe an Expiation of their Sins by their being baptized : And they are crossed on the Forehead, as his faithful Soldiers. And likewise they there celebrate the breaking of Bread.” But they did not take these Ceremonies from the Christians ; they are of a much antienter Date ; perhaps from the Beginning of the World.

‘ The *Romans* became extremely fond of the *Mithriac* Sacreds, whence here you find this Sculpture in the Imperial City. I saw an Image of *Mithras* at *Chester*, and no Doubt there are many more in *Britain*, either destroy’d, or undiscover’d.

“ St.

“ St. *Jerom*, in his Epistle to *Leta*, writes, A few Years ago, your Cozen *Gracchus*, a Name of “ *Patrician* Quality, when he was Præfect of the “ City, destroy’d, broke, and burnt the Cave of *Mithras*.” This was at *Rome*, and about the Year 378. Not long after, we may well imagine, your *Roman* Præfect of *York* followed his Example, and demolished the subterranean Temple in *Micklegate*; where this Sculpture of him was found.

Stamford, July 30, 1747.

WM. STUKELEY.

VII. *Part of a Letter from James Mounsey, M. D. Physician to the Czarina's Army, to Mr. Henry Baker, F. R. S. concerning the Russia Castor, the Baths at Carlsbad, the Salt-mines near Cracau, and various other Notices.*

Dear Sir,

Riga, July 1, 1749.

Read Nov. 23. 1749. I AM highly sensible of the Honour the Royal Society does me, in taking Notice of what I communicated to you, and only wish I were as capable as I am zealous to contribute any thing that might be satisfactory and acceptable to that illustrious Body, for which I have the greatest Veneration.

I cannot as yet perfectly answer your Enquiries concerning the *Russia* Castor which is not all from the same Animal, some of it being the *Prostatæ*, *Testes*, and Kidneys of the Beaver, gathered in the Spring; but the true Sort comes from quite a different

E c

Creature,

Inches. 27 1/2.



W. Stukely delin.

Inches. 28 1/2.

J. Myer sculp.